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THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION

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To
SIR BERNARD PARES

1867—1949

friend to one author and mentor to the other
and pioneer in his time in pushing back the horizon
in an area where the visibility is dangerously low

PREFACE

Samuel N. Harper (1882-1943), the author of the first edition of this book, had the distinction of being in many ways the pioneer American specialist in the Russian field. The son of the first president of the University of Chicago, he chose this field as a life vocation shortly after the turn of the century and made his first trip to Russia in time to be caught in the toils of the Revolution of 1905. From that point down to the time of his death during the battle of Stalingrad he devoted himself almost exclusively to Russian studies, taught for a quarter of a century at his father's university on "Russian language and institutions," and served as "unofficial adviser" to a number of America's ambassadors to Russia. The victory of the Bolsheviks in 1917 he regarded as a repudiation of Russia's best interests, and as the leading specialist in the United States State Department during the crucial years 1919-1921 he did his best to expose what he considered to be the dangers inherent in Bolshevism. When the tensions of the Russian Civil War had died down, however, he continued his studies of the now *Soviet* Russia, returned to that country in 1926 and on many subsequent occasions, gradually rediscovered his liking for the old Russia in its new forms, and wrote a number of books on Soviet problems which had the almost unique distinction of being regarded as authoritative both in the United States and in the Soviet Union.

It was with this preparation that, in 1937 after an extended trip to Russia the year before, Professor Harper undertook to write the first edition of *The Government of the Soviet Union*, a book which has since been the standard text on the subject in the English language. And it was this book which, in 1945 following the death of Mr. Harper, his heirs requested the present writer to revise and bring up to date. Considering the eminence of the